LifeMoves



Behavioral Health Program Analysis

THERAPY DOSAGE TO PREDICT OUTCOMES

LifeMoves.org

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge our city and county partners for their collaboration, guidance, and shared commitment to expanding mental health resources for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

We extend our sincere thanks to our behavioral health clinicians, therapists, shelter case managers, and program directors whose daily dedication, clinical insight, and frontline work made this evaluation possible. We also thank our evaluation and data teams who supported data collection, analysis, and key findings.

Finally, we express our deepest appreciation to the LifeMoves clients whose courage, progress, and shared experiences continue to inform and strengthen our work toward permanent housing and stability.



Research Team

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Program Overview

About the Program

The **LifeMoves Behavioral Health Program** started in 2020 with the goal to increase clients' interpersonal skills and awareness, improving their decision-making processes and ability to engage in productive behaviors that increase the likelihood of beneficial outcomes.

The program provides individual and group therapy services to LifeMoves child and adult clients, as well as neuropsychological services.

What We Set to Find Out

We wanted to know: When our clients go to one-on-one therapy, do they do better? We looked at six things:

- ***Housing Placement***
- ***Length of Stay***
- ***Program Engagement***
- ***Behavioral Incidents***
- ***Income***
- ***Mental Health Symptoms***

In short, we wanted to answer: Does therapy help people move toward stable housing?

Why It Matters

Therapy helps people build stronger relationships, understand themselves better, and make choices that lead to good things for them and their families. But we wanted to test our working theory: Therapy eases mental health struggles. That helps people take part in the other services we offer and helps them move into housing.



Our Approach

Two ways of looking: the numbers and the voices

The Numbers: *What the Data Tells Us*

We used our client records to compare people who went to therapy often with people who went rarely or not at all. Since 2020, the program has served about 200–300 people a year, roughly 8% of the people in our shelters. 513 adults whose shelter stays had ended since fiscal year 2023 (524 stays in total). We focused on stays that had ended so we could see how things turned out.



The Voices: *What Numbers Can't Capture*

We sat down with six program directors, the people who see daily life in the shelters, to hear how therapy shows up in clients' experience. *Together, they give us the full picture.*

How We Measured

We grouped people by how many sessions they attended. People arrive with different challenges. So we accounted for mental health diagnoses, disabilities, substance use, and whether someone was referred to an employment or benefits specialist.

Therapy Dosage Level	Sessions	Interpretation
Not Engaged	0-2	Clients referred to therapy but did not engage
Sub-theraputic	3-5	Engaged but below clinical dosage
Therapeutically Dosed	6+	Minimum dosage from clinical literature for measureable theraputic benefit

Our Approach

Things to Keep In Mind

Caveats to Our Study

- **We only looked at stays that had ended.** People still in the program aren't counted, and they may be the ones with the greatest needs.
- **Mental health survey data is new.** We've only collected the DASS-21 (a 21-question check-in on depression, anxiety and stress) for 10 months, so those results are early.
- **Behavioral incidents are only partly visible.** We can only see incidents that led to someone leaving the program.
- **We counted one-on-one therapy only.** Group sessions track attendance, but not who attended.



The Need Is Real

Many of the people we serve are carrying a heavy load.

- **58%** show moderate to severe depression
- **63%** show moderate to severe anxiety
- **47%** show moderate to severe stress
- Nearly 1 in 3 **(31%)** show extremely severe anxiety

Sustained behavioral health support is directly linked to stronger housing and income outcomes.

Our Findings

What We Learned

Housing

Therapy is linked to more people finding permanent housing, for single adults

- **Single adults who completed 6+ sessions were nearly twice as likely to move into permanent housing:** 47% vs. 34% for those who didn't engage.
- 3–5 sessions made no clear difference. The benefit showed up at six.
- Families moved into permanent housing about 83% of the time regardless of therapy, which is great news in itself.
- Two-thirds of program directors said they'd seen therapy help clients get housed.

Income

Therapy is linked to rising income, for single adults

- **Single adults who completed 6+ sessions were more than twice as likely to see their income go up: 34% vs. 18%**.
- 3–5 sessions made no clear difference.
- Therapy was linked to whether income went up, not by how much.
- Families showed no pattern.

Incidents

Therapy is linked to fewer exits for breaking program rules.

- **17% of clients who completed therapy left because of a behavioral issue, compared to 24% of those who didn't engage.**
- The difference came mostly from rule-related exits (non-compliance), where rates were about half.
- Therapy showed no link to violence-related exits.
- Half of the program directors said behavioral health services had a major impact on incidents.

Our Findings

What We Learned

Length of Stay

Therapy-engaged clients stay longer, and that's not be a bad thing

Clients who completed therapy stayed about 60% longer in shelter. But this isn't simply good or bad. Staff told us that many clients need more care than the system can offer, and there's nowhere else for them to go. So length of stay may reflect high needs and limited options.

Program Engagement

Therapy didn't change how much people use other services

- Clients met with their case managers about half as often as planned, whether or not they did therapy.
- Only about 1 in 10 single adults reached our 90% engagement goal.
- This holds across the whole shelter system, so it points to capacity and scheduling, not therapy.

"If someone's engaging with their therapist and honoring their appointments, they're likely to be honoring the same ones with their case manager." — Program Director

Mental Health: Early Signs of Feeling Better

Among 43 clients who completed the survey more than once, scores moved in a healthier direction for depression, anxiety and stress. The drops in depression and anxiety were large enough to be meaningful.



"We see that our values are in alignment with clients that are making progress in program, and hold onto them for later success." — Program Director

The Impact at a Glance

The Outcomes

- **Need is high**: More than half show signs of depression and anxiety.
- **Housing and income:** Single adults with full therapy were nearly 2× as likely to move into permanent housing and 2× as likely to see income rise.

2X

- Fewer behavioral exits, and longer stays.
- **Services:** Therapy didn't change case management attendance.
- **Mental health:** Early signs of lower depression and anxiety.





What Program Directors See Daily

The view from the groundwork

- Over 80% see behavioral health as one piece of a team approach, alongside case management, medical, and substance use services.
- Half said case managers can focus on goals once clients aren't derailed by crises.
- The most common theme: clients become calmer, more focused, and more engaged.

Why It Matters

Therapy is one of the most powerful tools we have

- It's linked to better outcomes for the people it reaches, even after accounting for health challenges and other supports.
- Yet, it reaches only **7–8%** of our clients, so many more could benefit.



What's Next

Behind every number in this report is a person working to rebuild their life, and what we learned is encouraging. When people get consistent therapy, they're more likely to find stable housing, see their income grow, and stay on track in the program. Today, our Behavioral Health Program reaches only about 8% of the people we serve, so there is real opportunity to help more neighbors who could benefit. As we move forward, we'll keep listening to our clients and staff, improve how we track progress, and use what we've learned to make sure support for mental health is part of every path out of homelessness.

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